

## 1. General description of the project:

A National Historic Landmark, San Xavier Mission was founded as a Catholic Mission by Father Eusebio Kino in 1692. The present church's construction began in 1783. Constructed of low-fire clay brick (*ladrillos*), stone and lime mortar, the entire structure is roofed with masonry vaults laid out in the shape of a cross, making it unique among Spanish Colonial buildings within the United States. It is the oldest intact European structure in Arizona. A major tourist attraction in Southern Arizona, the church's interior is filled with marvelous original statuary and mural paintings. It is a place where visitors can truly step back in time and enter an authentic 18th Century space.

Sitting at the extreme northern edge of Nueva España at the time of its founding, the Mission has survived heat, storm, earthquake, human neglect and Apache attacks. Included in the Gadsden Purchase, the property became part of the United States in 1853 and in 1859, the American Catholic church assigned San Xavier to the Santa Fe diocese. Bishop Lamy authorized the first major repairs, particularly to the roof, at that time.

An earthquake in 1887 damaged the church façade and the main dome. After it was reassigned to the Tucson diocese, the church was renovated and repaired by Bishop Henry Granjon in 1905. During the early 1950s, the church was again extensively repaired, including the West Tower and the front façade, by local craftsmen using modern materials.

A group of community leaders formed Patronato San Xavier in 1978 to promote the conservation of the church. Soon after a Patronato-commissioned comprehensive study of the church's condition was completed, water seeped into the west wall of the sanctuary, forcing an emergency conservation effort by the Patronato. In a five-year program, an international team of conservators cleaned, removed overpainting and repaired the interior painted and sculptural art.

The Patronato continues the exterior preservation begun in 1989. Its restoration team is removing incompatible elements of earlier repair work, and through the use of authentic materials, the team is repairing the structure's fabric and re-finishing the exterior surface of the entire building with a traditional lime plaster. Their work is the largest and most successful lime mortar restoration in the United States, and in 2006, the team leader Danny Morales was recognized by a Governor's Heritage Preservation Honor Award.

Since that work began, the exterior walls and roof of the main chapel have been stabilized and replastered. Over the past five years, the West Tower has been restored, including a stunning restoration of the lantern above the tower that was damaged by lightning in 1939. Current projects involve the conservation of the baptistery interior (which was delayed because it is situated beneath the West Tower).

## 2. Describe how this project meets the Legacy Project criteria:

The church is living Arizona history. It is "the most spectacular remnant of the Spanish colonial mission system in United States territory," according to the Marilyn Larew, historian

for the National Park Service who nominated the site for the National Register of Historic Places in the 1960s. It is on the United States tentative list of potential World Heritage sites. It retains its original purpose of ministering to the religious needs of its parishioners.

The church is open to visitors at no charge, every day, 7 a.m. - 5 p.m., including a seasonal schedule of Masses. More than 250,000 people from all over the world visit San Xavier each year making it a top area tourism attraction. The Patronato is a nonprofit organization whose board of directors includes area community leaders. A donor base of more than 1,900 people from all over the country, as well as private and public companies, foundations and government agencies, have financially supported the church's restoration. Ownership and operational control remains with Mission San Xavier, a nonprofit corporation run by the Order of the Franciscans Minor, a mendicant religious order and the Catholic Dioceses of Tucson. Although not affiliated with the church, Patronato provides its services at the pleasure of the priest in charge.

Construction of the present church began 225 years ago, and Patronato's goal is to preserve and maintain it in perpetuity for the benefit of future generations. There is a free museum at the site below the church's East Tower. Visitors may also view a video showing the church's restoration. Through the museum and area resort hotels, Patronato distributes a free visitors brochure outlining historical points and key dates.

The Patronato's exterior preservation work has been guided by a restoration plan developed through a grant from the Getty Foundation. All work conforms to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation. During the Patronato-guided restoration begun in 1989, the exterior walls of the chapel were stabilized and replastered. Over the past five years, the West Tower has been restored, including a stunning restoration of the lantern above the tower that was damaged by lightning in 1939. We are currently in the initial steps of preparing to restore the church's façade and preparing the never finished East Tower for restoration.

### 3. Project timeline:

#### Façade

The church's façade, which was last restored in 1953, is in the process of a thorough survey and evaluation. Steps will be to conclude the mapping of locations on the façade where different materials can be identified; obtain additional samples of the original pigments (and binder) and mortar (This will be necessary to identify which areas contain elements of the original material -plaster or paint layer - or have been reconstructed in an earlier restoration; perform cleaning tests over the surfaces of the cement plaster in different areas to determinate the composition and hardness of the cement (All cement on the structure was applied by earlier restoration efforts.); perform tests to determinate the state of conservation of the original material under the cement; review all the documentation available (documents, old photos, etc.) in preparation for writing a comprehensive report. When these steps have been accomplished, Patronato will be able to develop a specific conservation plan and cost estimate to restore the area.

### East Tower

We have received a State Heritage grant through the Arizona State Parks to begin work on the East Tower. The East Tower will be stabilized and refinished in three phases by removing the cement plaster that was applied during earlier repairs, repairing and repointing the historic brick with like-materials, and refinishing the repaired brick with a breathing lime & sand plaster. The work is expected to require three to four years time, depending upon the condition of the underlying brick and the ability to raise funds.

### Mortuary

A small mortuary building was constructed west of the church about 1803. The building is deemed to be in good condition at present. However, it is also covered in Portland cement from prior repair efforts and at some future time will exhibit similar cracking and deterioration as the main church, due to time and the use of incompatible materials. A timeline for restoration has not been established.

### Convento building

Not a part of the church, the convento was constructed along the east wall of the church in the 1840s and has been updated casually over time, so that it is a mix of historical and more recent construction. Enough evidence exists to believe that the original Espinosa church, constructed about 1751 from mud bricks and mesquite beams, was reconstructed as part of the convento building and is the location now of the Juan Diego Chapel. Some stabilization work is ongoing.

4. Location: The church is situated on 14 acres within the Tohono O'odham Indian Nation, about 9 miles south of downtown Tucson. The acreage was deeded to the Franciscans by a Congressional act in 1913.
5. Partners: N/A
6. Budget: Since 1989, the Patronato has raised more than \$6 million for the interior and exterior restoration of the church. The East Tower Phase 1 (like the tower itself, the project is divided into three phases) is estimated at \$375,000. Patronato has been awarded a \$150,000 Historic Preservation grant from the Arizona State Parks for this phase. The additional \$225,000 will come from fund raising. The overall cost of the East Tower project is estimated at about \$1.5 million. There is no estimate yet for the façade which is undergoing evaluation, or the mortuary and convento which have not been assessed.

Name of Project: San Xavier Mission

Applicant: Patronato San Xavier

Contact Person: Vern Lamplot, Executive Director

Address: PO Box 522

Tucson, AZ 85702

Telephone Number: 520 407-6130

e-mail address: [vlamplot@earthlink.net](mailto:vlamplot@earthlink.net)

Web site address: [www.patronatosanxavier.org](http://www.patronatosanxavier.org) and [www.web.mac.com/patronato](http://www.web.mac.com/patronato)

 6/17/08